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Background Paper

INSTITUTIONS, LAWS AND PRACTICES HAMPERING WOMEN ENGAGEMENT (I)

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Part 1: Gender and Women's Empowerment

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1. The Overall Context

There is strong evidence about the situation of women in the Middle East and North Africa region despite a lack of highly accurate data available at the national and regional levels. The data that is available reveals that the empowerment of women and the level of equality between men and women are fluctuating. The most important findings concerning the status of women can be summarized as follows:

- The rights of women that do exist are poorly enforced. The economic, social, civic and political capacities of women are low. Consequently women are largely disempowered and uninfluential.
- Poverty deeply burdens women more than men, affecting everything from their education, health, and economic access to their participation in decision making. This directly affects women's ability to enjoy all their human rights.
- The lives and civil participation of Arab women in the countries of the region are affected directly and indirectly by conflict and war.¹

The current context and new dynamics

The Arab World Region has undergone changes as a result of massive political protests in some countries. These events, collectively called the "Arab Spring," and the sacrifices that have been made in the course of these events, have given rise to high aspirations among the populations of the region.² The ensuing reality, however, has neither matched the aspirations nor the sacrifices of the women and men who took part in these events. In the Arab Spring countries women and youth in particular have been excluded from the political sphere. Moreover, as threats to security and stability have become more imminent, women's rights have been threatened. Civil society has fought to (at the minimum) preserve the existing rights being threatened by the emergence of conservative and extremist movements. These movements are not new but have become more visible with increased media coverage.³ They

¹ Arab women and legislation Cawtar's AWDR, Cawtar/Agfund, Tunis 2014; Gender, law and policies in MENA, OCDE/CAWTAR, Paris. 2014; www.genderclearinghouse.org; National legislations, policies and mechanisms: impact on economic empowerment of women in the Arab region, CAWTAR / Oxfam , 2013.

² Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi, Olivier Fillieule (dir.), pour une sociologie des situations révolutionnaires, retour sur les révolutions arabes, Revue française de sciences politiques, 2012, p.767

³ Michel Reeber, L'islam en mutation, CNRS, 2005

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include calls for female circumcision in Tunisia, virginity inspections in Egypt, and physical and verbal sexual abuse in Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain.⁴

While the new Constitutions adopted in Tunisia and Egypt reconfirmed the principles of gender equality for legal and human rights, it is obvious that the road ahead is still long, particularly in light of the recent sexual violence during the election of the new president in Egypt.⁵

There is still the possibility that the situation could deteriorate further since there remains clear threats to women's human rights and security in many countries in the region.⁶

The demand for democracy and the democratic transformation in many Middle East and North Africa countries, which began in earnest in 2011 and 2012, has been accompanied by political upheavals that have influenced the economic growth, social stability, and human security of the region.⁷ These political upheavals have also affected women's security in all areas of their lives. For women, little has changed as of 2014: gender is still not sufficiently taken into consideration by the vast majority of the new class of politicians.⁸

However, Arab women in some countries still struggle for equality. In the countries where progress has been made more access is needed to avoid setbacks. In some ways the problems contributing to the marginalization of women after the Arab Spring are deeper than ever consequently to new waves of extremist's movements⁹. This problems include:

- Cultural legacies and social barriers that block women's participation as active partners in the change process
- Limited economic resources and lack of strategic planning to sustain women's participation have prevented full participation of women in the development process
- The weak legal frameworks for equal rights and the non-enforcement of existing laws
- Weak political interests at the national and regional levels for gender issues, pushing women away from the public arena and towards traditional roles

To understand the general context of women's rights (including young women) we need to look at a series of interlinked factors:

- The legal framework which determines the extent to which women enjoy legal protection of their rights
- Country policies, programs, and strategies which establish opportunities for the empowerment of women towards achieving gender equality

⁴ Blue Bra Girl and other Setbacks for Women Since Arab Spring : ALhayat 9 Mars 2012

⁵ Rainer Grote, Tilmann J. Roder, Constitutional Change after the Arab Spring, research project, Max Planck Institute, Heidelberg

⁶ Yasmine Salah, Egyptian court sentences 5 men to life for sexual harassment, www.swissinfo.ch

⁷ GillesKeppel, *Passion arabe*, Gallimard, 2013

⁸ Shibley Telhamy, at the hearing session "pluralism in the OSCE Mediterranean partners", Brookings news, 14 June 2014;

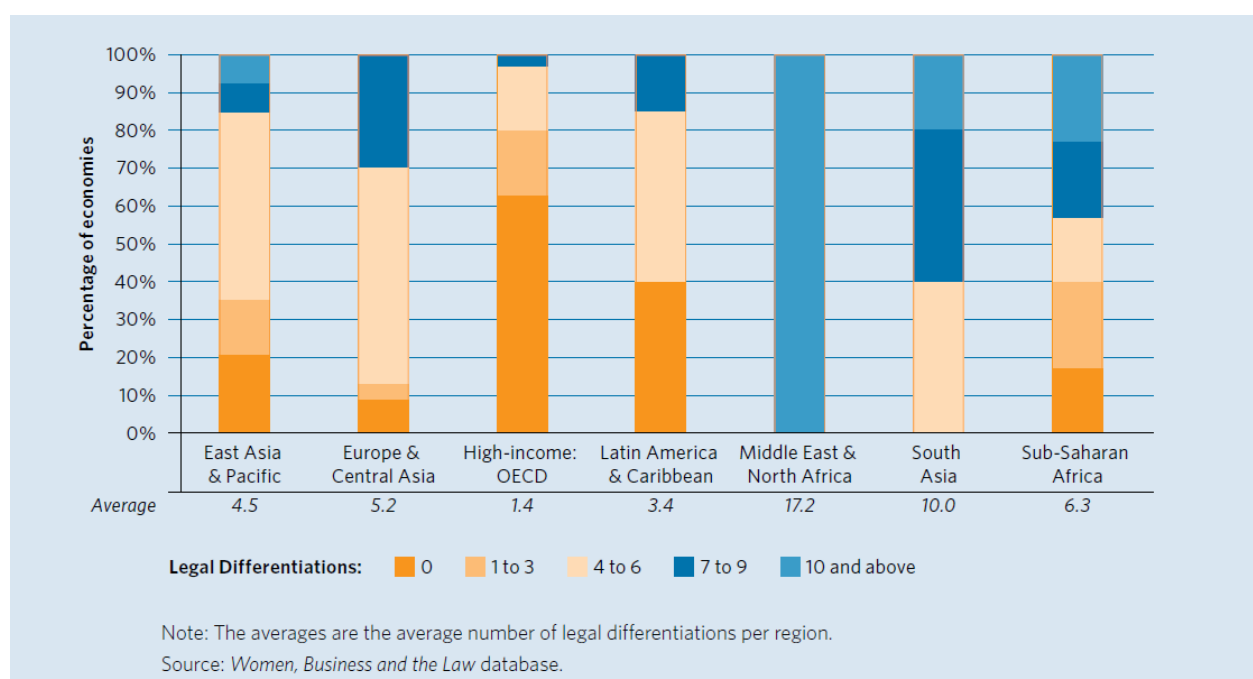
⁹ The status of women's rights post Arab spring ,Ambar Zobairi ,deputy program regional manager for MENA with Elisabeth Reiter ,IFES, dec.19,2013

- The accession of countries to international conventions and covenants, especially those related to human rights in general and women's rights in particular

The policies, programs, and strategies of a country are the keys to empowering women to achieve equality with men. These are implemented through national mechanisms and national institutions that ensure that countries implement women's rights effectively. Unfortunately in the region the impact of international frameworks are weakened and compromised by reservations to many articles during ratification.

2 THE Legal and Institutional Framework

The legal system defines the roles and status of men and women within the family and society and often reflects the ideology of leaders and the general population. Women enjoy legal protection to the extent that their human rights are reflected in a given legal and judicial framework. These rights are undermined when the laws of a country include differentiations made on the basis of gender. As the graph below shows, Arab countries have the highest number of legal differentiations in the world.¹⁰



¹⁰ <http://wbl.worldbank.org/~media/FPDKM/WBL/Documents/Reports/2012/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2012.pdf>

Laws that cover the public and private domains

However, some progress has been made in the area of gender equality; most importantly amendments were introduced that included new provisions on women's rights and women's participation in decision making in public life. Some countries have amended their constitutions to increase the level of women's political participation (Algeria, Morocco, and Iraq) or adopted new ones which included a gender related parity principle or equality principle (Tunisia and Egypt).

In many countries reforms were not introduced at the constitutional level but were made by modifying existing laws or passing laws related to the status of persons, family, labor, nationality, as well as laws combating domestic violence such as sexual harassment and assault. In addition to these steps, further positive actions have been taken at the level of parties, parliaments and local bodies to increase the rights of women and their participation, these actions include quotas and reserved seats.

Laws that regulate work and economic participation

While gender-based discrimination in public life has made some progress, in the private and family life of women little has changed. Progress can be noted in some laws encouraging private initiatives related to women's economic empowerment. There have also been amendments to labor, income tax, social security and civil retirement laws, the civil service systems, as well as laws and provisions related to loans—especially those that benefit women's projects. However, social, religious and cultural norms affect the level of women's economic empowerment, regardless of the text of the laws related to gender. The fact is that women still have less access to and control of resources, regardless of their capabilities or educational achievements. Moreover, while girls and young women show better performance in higher education in many fields of study, they remain largely absent from important positions in government, national agencies and the private sector.¹¹

Policies and programs related to gender

Fortunately the goal of achieving equality between men and women has reached national agendas, and governments have started to integrate this goal into various strategic policies and programs. Most Arab countries are setting up national economic and social plans of 3, 5, 10, 15, and 20 years, a portion of which they allocate for women. Unfortunately many countries are creating programs usually called, "Women and Development," that treat gender as one of many isolated problems they need to address, rather than a systemic issue which relates to all policies and programs. Alternatively, some countries are integrating women into all sections of planning (the gender mainstreaming approach). This is the case in Jordan (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation), Morocco (Ministry of Finance) and Egypt (The National Council for Women). However, these plans rarely become programs because of a lack of funding and capacity, and the fact that national agendas do not consider women's issues a top priority.

Within the framework of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, most Arab countries set up national strategies for women's empowerment, including economic empowerment, focusing on one of the 12 strategic objectives and actions coming out of the Women's International Conference. The countries that created strategies to combat violence against women, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Kurdistan (Iraq) have started to consider the impact of poverty on the victims of gender-based violence and to diagnose other types of economic related violence.

Government policies and *adequately funded* programs related to the empowerment of women. Still more efforts are needed to eliminate discrimination against women in many domains.

This can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach, not only by changing laws, but also by putting into operation the appropriate policies and programs.

Arab countries have also adopted the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals, especially MDG1 on reducing poverty and MDG3 on gender equality. They are also committed to international conventions that lead to new strategies supported by international organizations especially the UN agencies. However, implementation of these initiatives is still far from satisfactory and the assessed interventions have not resulted in significant changes in societies, the lives of women, or development in general.

Legal systems and related amendments need to be complemented by government policies and *adequately funded* programs related to the empowerment of women. Still more efforts are needed to eliminate discrimination against women in many domains. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach, not only by changing laws, but also by putting into operation the appropriate policies and programs.

National Mechanisms

While national councils and commissions for women, gender focus units, ministries, and similar bodies, concerned with gender, have been established by Arab countries to comply with the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, they were not provided with the resources needed for success. Institutions in charge of promoting equal opportunities between men and women are fundamental and need to be developed, implemented and strengthened. They are key in sustaining women's efforts towards greater political, social and economic inclusion. They also require financial resources, technical knowledge, and human resources.

Arab countries have adopted the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals, especially MDG1 on reducing poverty and MDG3 on gender equality. These countries are also committed to international Conventions; they have adopted new strategies and initiatives supported by international organizations—especially the UN agencies. The policies or programs supported by international donors need to be assessed, and taken into consideration by everyone. In spite of the implementation of these strategies, there are still no significant

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changes in the daily lives of women, and we do not see the expected improvement of the related institutions, especially their human resources management.¹²

The Arab countries often lack one or more of the following:

- Clear political will
- High level technical capacities in monitoring and evaluation, including the monitoring of women's rights violations
- A baseline to inform the design of policies for further expansion of women's participation, including non-conventional positions
- Data collection and strategic reporting
- Gender-sensitive budgets
- Accountability principles in governance structures

Women's empowerment and the promotion of social justice between men and women should be seen as a circular process that is both top-down—institutions, laws and politics—and bottom-up—women's collective and individual actions changing and improving laws and institutions. Women organizations and groups have played an important role before and after the Arab spring. Before the Arab Spring women focused on the link between political systems and oppression, now they are far more concerned with the link between economic development and civil and political rights. They are also more likely to advocate for civil rights and social integration than advocate for changes to governments.¹³ In the Arab spring countries and particularly in Egypt and Tunisia women, as individuals and as groups and associations, are becoming more aware of the opportunities to be agents of change even if their voices are not always heard in official media channels.¹⁴

¹² HRM in the middle east :toward a greater understanding, the international journal of human resource management, vol.25 ,issue 2, 2014

¹³ Féminismes au Maghreb, nouvelles questions féministes, Revue internationale francophone, n2 /14; Antipodes.

¹⁴ See the documentary film “women taste freedom” <http://the.tasteoffreedom.org> “for the first time and in the countries as Egypt, Tunisia...they are the epicenter of demonstration

3 Women and Political Engagement in Tunisia

Widespread apathy towards politics characterized Tunisia under Ben Ali.¹⁵ Authoritarianism represses engagement by increasing participation costs leading to the rejection of politics. The revolution in Tunisia has increased political participation slightly. There is now a new political context in Tunisia, one of democratic transition, creating new political opportunities. Additionally, there are new laws for associations (24/09/14) which have led to a dramatic increase of associations and parties, which now number more than 16,000.¹⁶

The new constitution of 2014 reinforced these political opportunities, containing the principle of freedom of expression and association, and reducing obstacles hindering women's political participation with the confirmation of the parity principle. The parity law on electoral lists was adopted for the election of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in October 2011.¹⁷ Women were able to collect 29.82% of the seats (65 women out of 218 elected representative).¹⁸ This rate constitutes a slight increase compared to the number of women parliamentarians under Ben Ali (27.57%) but was still below expectations. Nevertheless, this can be considered progress when compared to the governments formed during the transitional period that followed.

During the first Ennahda government only two women received ministerial positions out of twenty under Hammadi Jebali (the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Family and Children).¹⁹ The second Ennahda government led by Ali Larayedh included just one woman (again the Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Family and Children).²⁰ The technocrat government cabinet had only two women ministers and one women Secretary of State.²¹

During the elections of 2014 women took 31.33% of the seats of parliament and one woman ran for President. But women are far still from holding key positions in political parties and in unions. In the most recent elections of Tunisian Workers General Union's executive board

¹⁵ Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser, *Le syndrome autoritaire. Politique en Tunisie de Bourguiba à Ben Ali*, Paris, Political Science University Press, 2003, 365 pages. Béatrice Hibou, *La force de l'obéissance. Economie politique de la répression en Tunisie*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006, 372 pages

¹⁶ IFEDA (Centre d'études de formation et de documentation, tunisie) –database , www.ifeda.org)

¹⁷ Parity on electoral lists was promulgated by the Higher Commission for the Achievement of the Objectives of the Revolution. This law regulating the electoral process imposed parity and alternation between men and women on all electoral lists. It recommended rejecting lists not complying with the parity / alternation principle.

¹⁸ http://www.anc.tn/site/main/AR/docs/composition/compos_s.jsp

¹⁹ The Troika government composed of 3 parties: Ennahdha party, the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties(FDTL) and the Congress for the Republic (CPR) was formed after the elections for the National Constituent Assembly-ANC-in October 2011

²⁰ The government headed by Ali Larraedh (Ennahdha) was formed in March 2013 following the resignation of Hamadi Jebali.

²¹ Independent government headed by Mehdi Jomaa

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none of the four women candidates were elected. The data available for political parties also reflects women's limited presence in political or executive offices.²²

For women's full political participation, additional obstacles related to cultural and social norms which still exist in Tunisia must be removed. Politically active women face numerous obstacles related to gender including difficulties reconciling their public and private lives. Women in politics do not receive the same recognition as men. Their work is not regarded as important as that of men. They also lack the same access to political training, such as public speaking. When they participate in public debates on radio or TV they are not considered to have the same legitimacy to speak about politics especially policies that relate to life outside of the home. Thus we see that the political life is the reproduction of the gender division in the society.

4. Young women, like young men are not attracted by Political Engagement

Despite the progress that has been made through legal reforms and political change in the Arab countries the perception of youth and especially of young women about politics has not changed. In all these countries Youth in general and young women in particular are still more attracted by associations and protest movements than by political parties. They prefer informal protest practices such as demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, cyber activism.²³

There is not much crossover from these practices into political parties. Few cyberactivists, for example, are connected with political parties, despite of their shift from underground to mainstream. As example, one of the most famous Tunisian bloggers, Lina Ben Mhenni, explained that she didn't want to represent any one: "I am just LINA."²⁴

Since the Arab Spring, a contradiction has been observed in youth political participation. Young people still reject conventional political involvement in political parties despite their increased interest for public affairs and visible involvement in social movements and social networks.²⁵ Rather than being only focused on private endeavors, as numerous studies conducted before the Arab Spring postulated, or being only interested in political issues

²² The choice of political parties is based on representation at the National Constitutional Assembly also in consideration of emerging coalitions. Some parties represented at the NCA are not mentioned due to the unavailability of data.

²³ Newsom, Victoria A, Lara Lengel "Arab women social media and the Arab Spring: applying the framework of digital reflexivity to analyse gender and online activism", *Journal of International Women Studies* 2012, p 31, vol.13

²⁴ Romain Lecomte in "Les réseaux sociaux sur Internet à l'heure des transitions démocratiques" sous la direction de Sihem Najjar, IRMC-KARTHALA 2013, p51 ; Radsh, Courtney C, Sahar Khamis « in their own voices : technologically mediated empowerment and transformations among Arab women 3 "Feminist Media studies, 2013, 135, P. 881 "

²⁵ Sihem Najjar (dir.), *les nouvelles sociabilités du NET en méditerranée*, coll. Hommes et sociétés, Karthala 2012; same author: *le cyberactivisme au Maghreb et dans le monde*, collection Hommes et sociétés, Karthala Paris 2012

worldwide and not in their country, youth do care about local politics, but they prefer alternative forms of participation²⁶

Young women are still not engaging in politics despite increases in education and decreases in engagement risks. As with young men they have a negative perception of politics. Recent anthropological research shows they “prefer to be members of associations rather than parties because they feel more independent and they have more freedom and they don’t have answer to a hierarchy; for them parties are characterized by subversion and selflessness.”²⁷

The fact that young people fall back on association programs and activities or on occasional protests instead of voting or joining party structures seems to be due to their age and the nature of the political offerings. The last presidential election in Tunisia illustrates this phenomenon in that more than 60% of voters were women aged 40 years and older.²⁸ It seems that political offerings are not attractive: “when critical perceptions come back to well established party structures and well set political practices, the tendency to engage becomes weaker.”²⁹ The decline of conventional participation and party activism to the benefit of social participation is not unique to the Tunisian context, but seems to be an international phenomenon common in Western countries.³⁰

When it comes to the impact of gender on young women’s political mobilization, gender-based socialization is fundamental in creating a desire for militancy. For long time socialization in Arab countries was only in the school and with the family, among the most patriarchal institutions, dominated by costumes and traditions. Today socialization occurs on social networks which offer a place of more freedom and creative for women. Cyberactivism and civic participation are types of engagement that allow women to more easily succeed due to anonymity, absence of political competition, and easier access to the public. Unfortunately a large proportion of the population in the region is not connected to the internet. Civil society should advocate for increased access and use of social media among women. They can also educate women on the use of social media, a topic which is still understudied.

5. Questions for Future Research

Inequality between men and women is a fact that cannot be ignored or denied. However, inequality can take on different forms and can be observed in various expressions throughout the different stages of life and various members of a society:

- A weak political will for adopting new gendered laws

²⁶ Maryem Ben Salem, formes traditionnelles, formes nouvelles de la participation politique des jeunes femmes en Tunisie, CAWTAR IDRC 2013

²⁷ same author ,Maryem Ben Salem, formes traditionnelles, formes nouvelles de la participation politique des jeunes femmes en Tunisie, CAWTAR IDRC 2013

²⁸ www.webmanagercenter.com./tunisie-elections-un-million-de-femmes-;leader magazine,27 12 /2014

²⁹ Daniel Gaxie, “Rétributions du militantisme et paradoxes de l’action collective,” *Revue suisse de science politique*, 11 (1), 2005, pp. 159-190.

³⁰ Mark Gray and Miki Caul, “Declining Voter Turnout in Advanced Industrial Democracies, 1950 to 1997: The Effects of Declining Group Mobilization,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 2000 33, pp.1091-1122.

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- Unjust laws or lack of adequate law, e.g. regarding sexual harassment and violence towards women
- The existence of various forms of cultural discrimination against women, including new forms arising after the Arab Spring
- That discriminations affect women in both their public and private lives
- The general level of awareness on women's situation is low, even women themselves are often not aware of their rights.
- Restrictions enforced by a law, policy, practice, and tradition prevent women from enjoying their full human rights

Just as inequality differs from country to country it also differs in scope and intensity throughout a single country and even within a single societal group. Therefore it is essential to conduct qualitative assessments and analyses to recognize and fully understand how best to address these inequalities. The areas of future research that we are proposing are specific to the socio-cultural and institutional context of the Arab world we have described above, and are organized around four intertwined dimensions: The institutional dimension, the cultural dimension the relational dimension, and the civic dimension. Within these four dimensions it is necessary to question the representations and practices that are at the root of discrimination and gender inequality.

Women in general

Women have the ability to strengthen societies, to run businesses and enterprises of all sizes; they are productive in agriculture and ensure the survival of their families and societies. The studies have shown that the participation of women in public life leads to stronger enterprises and public institutions. How then to overcome the resistance to increasing their participation? Which measures and policies can be implemented at the political level, the economic level and the cultural level?

What are the priorities proposed by the main actors in the relevant countries, including civil society organizations such as NGOs, development and women organizations, chambers of commerce, media, members of parliament, trade organizations or other partners such as donors? What is needed to conduct legislative or institutional reforms and how will these reforms affect society and culture?

Do the international and regional commitments of the various countries support each other or not?

Do they contribute to the realization of women's human rights and equality between men and women? If yes, then how? If no, then why not?

Women are subjected to discrimination, violence and inequality: Which measures and politics can be implemented against the persistent forms of violence against women?

How to foster the equal participation of men and women both in public and private life?

Young Women

The youth category is wider than an age-group or a physiological stage and has to be addressed as a cultural and social phenomenon³¹

The question that needs to be asked is whether this process of emancipation and transition from one phase to another is the same for young men and for young women. In other words, is gender a fundamental differentiator among young people, in terms of emancipation and autonomy?

Are differences based on gender between young men and women being exacerbated or otherwise reduced, depending on the class membership, level of education, socio-occupational status and age group?

Awareness and behavior patterns offer sometimes different and contradictory models: Although common values do exist, young people especially young girls interact differently with family and schoolmates, in places of work, with friends, in clubs or even in the arena of politics and public issues. The same person may be flexible on “girl’s education” but strongly opposed to women's employment or a “modern family code.” reflecting of a schizophrenia paradigm

How these contradictory patterns are integrated in terms of behavior and ways of life?

How and to what extent gender relations structure the differences between young men and women in attitudes, values and social behavior?

Does gender affect the behavior of young women based on the above mentioned variables?

5.1 The Institutional Dimension

Within the institutional dimension of new research we must examine the strains of the democratic experiment, as experienced in different Arab countries; as well as the relationship of legal frameworks to religion, and how they deal with the inherent social challenges that implies (societal peace, power relations, challenges to legitimacy to symbolic powers, etc) We can also examine the ability of the state to develop instruments to manage conflict and discord.”³²

Moreover, it is important to investigate the unequal access to economic, health, and financial resources, as well as to public services. Regarding access to resources, three sectors give us concrete examples that illustrate gender inequalities: health, education and the economy.

³¹ Arab Adolescent Girl: reality and prospects, CAWTAR 2003

³² Luc Boltanski et Laurent Thévenot, *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991

Health and reproductive health

What sources of information are available for women's general health care, common feminine ailments, and all aspects of reproductive and sexual health?³³

Does the legal age of marriage (minimum ages 14–18 exist) affect girls negatively?

Investigating late marriage as a phenomenon linked to economic circumstances and social habits that harm physical and psychological health, as well as overall social status and behavior patterns.

Late marriage extends the period of time separating puberty from marriage without society's being necessarily involved in this issue and its effects.³⁴

Education

“As a result of government investment in education, the average of educational attainment of the labor force increased. Though mostly regarded as a symbol of national achievement rather than a financial goal, high literacy rates have more than doubled in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa in the period spanning from 1960 to 1995. Despite the improvement of literacy levels in the region, there is a discrepancy between the countries with a significant urban population in which literacy rates have shown a steady increase and the predominantly rural countries where the percentage of illiteracy remains remarkably high due increases in the youth population.”³⁵

In the Arab region youth and Adolescents (teenagers, boys and girls) generally see school as necessary but unattractive, an unavoidable stage on the journey to employment and active life. Traditional teaching methods are repeatedly criticized as inefficient³⁶. The school is often seen as a jailer rather than an educational institution.³⁷

In some countries the schooling is compulsory by law but with little connection between school and labor market

Considering that, the questions that should be addressed are the following:

What are the skills and competencies that school offers to young people who could be mobilized on the job market and how these skills / resources are used?

³³ ICPD beyond 2014, UNFPA ; Carla Makhoul Obermeyer, Islam, women and politics ,population and development review1992, population council 1992; Jennan Ghazal Read, family religion and work, journal of marriage and the Family

³⁴ Hoda Rashad, Magued Osman, and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, Marriage in the Arab World, PRB bureau,N.Y, 2005

³⁵ World Bank (1999),Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A strategy towards learning for development, Washington, DC: The World Bank

³⁶ The Arab World Competitiveness Forum 2013, World Economic Forum 2013

³⁷ Rapport Arab adolescent précité, CAWTAR

Are there differences between young men and women in terms of relations to education (emphasis on education credentials, belief in the idea of social mobility through school, choice of course) and in terms of mobilization of resources / skills acquired?

Besides, starting from the observation that early school leaving and entry into the labor market usually seem to be linked to socio-economic circumstances, to what extent social class determine choices of education curricula and professional careers?

Are there differences at this level linked to gender?

Employment and social inclusion:

In the Arab region, the rate of unemployment is one of the highest in the world. Trainees and other young persons who join the labor market early consider working conditions generally unsatisfactory, with low wages and bad labor conditions, including violence. Has the situation change after the Arab Spring? ³⁸

Most consider work as compulsory for men but only desirable for women, and believe there is necessarily a social division of labor based on sex. Most see social status as decisive in choosing a job. They generally show little interest in the economic project as such, with a few exceptions. ³⁹

Are recruitment and progress in career still major fields for sex discrimination?

Do young women encounter more difficulties in entering the labor market than men and if this is the case, to what extent these obstacles are related to gender?

Why “Young women's workforce participation remains low despite education gains”?

To what extent, representations of femininity and masculinity and roles ascribed to one and the other instilled since childhood determine the choice of careers and the relationship to work among youth?

5.2 The Cultural Dimension

Within the cultural dimension of new research we must examine the obstacles to actually achieving effective equality between the sexes: the differences of socialization between girls and boys; what are considered norms and values? The unequal relation males and females have to cultural and recreational activities; and the stereotypical images of young men and women in the media.

New forces and opportunities have triggered advancements in women's empowerment and women's access to and control of resources. These include laws, policies and programs related to social and economic development through which women are able to reduce existing gaps and improve their social status. These opportunities are present even while other challenges that limit women's empowerment remain, such as poor implementation of programs and policies, and poor institutional performance.

³⁸ Youth frustration and the Arab spring, Trustees of Boston University, 2013, ISBN 978-1-936727-09-4

³⁹ Suad joseph, femmes et citoyenneté dans le monde arabe, pnud

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Women have also made important advancements at the personal level. These include better self-perception and self-esteem, more freedom of choice in their personal and public life, and increased ability to make decisions at the family level. These advancements can be observed in all countries in the region, including those under transition.⁴⁰

However there are still factors that negatively influence women's empowerment economically these include difficulty in balancing between work and family life requirements; the burden resulting from multiple roles that women perform within the household; low level of wages and income. Another important factor is the low rate of women in decision making positions through which they could assume control over the management of women's issues. However, in actual practice, this change could lead to positive outcomes or to the deterioration of the situation: "Women's rights must not be traded away at EU-Middle East ministerial conference" warns CARE International.⁴¹

Religion and new actors

What is the role of new religious actors? What is the impact of the religion?

Reports and research found that religion is ever present, if in varying degrees, in the minds of adolescents (teenagers) and youth of both sexes. It is usually bound up with tradition and social customs. There is no clear-cut attitude to religion⁴²

But religious' culture per se remains weak: a family legacy, the reproduction of the traditions, beliefs and values of parents or the result of new religious influences picked up at school or from the media.

How the widespread of political Islam impact youth attitudes and behavior?

Are there differences between young men and young women in their relation to religion in general and to political Islam in particular, on the one hand; and level of politico-religious commitment on the other hand?

Is there one single behavior pattern, or many (modernity v. authenticity, westernized vs. fundamentalist) particularly for young girls or are the differences so important that no objective,

5.3 The Relational Dimension

Within the cultural dimension of new research we must examine gender relations across various public and private areas such as family life, professional life, politics, school, etc.

⁴⁰ Rice University's; Baker Institute, Journal of Women and Human Rights in the Middle East :a change of seasons for Arab Women, issue 1, 2013

⁴¹ Arab spring or Arab autumn for women in the Middle East and North Africa? ""September 12, 2013 - Aid agency CARE International urges ministers from the European Union, meeting with Care, 2013

⁴² Women and Islamic cultures disciplinary, paradigms & approach, OLCL,2003- 2013

Family relationships

The family is very important in the region but how are the interfamily relations (harmony or conflict)?⁴³

What are the gender gaps if young men have greater freedom and public mobility than young women?⁴⁴

A general tendency for discrimination in favor of boys, possibly depriving daughters of the right to education or limiting that right to the minimum.

In most families gender segregation is the rule as regard to household chores, leaving home, dress and choice of friends,

What are the impact on their behavior and opportunities to find a valuable job? And to have leader role in society?

Social status

Social background is a major factor in shaping an individual, independent of personality. Belonging to an urban middle-class family with a high level of education and openness to diverse sources of culture provides youth with greater familiarity with modern values and concepts. This was observed in numerous interviews conducted on the field in seven Arab countries in the CAWTAR's adolescent report

5.4 The Civic Dimension

The civic dimension is an important vector for the equality or inequality of the sexes. Here it would be wise to introduce new research in the following areas:

The ability of young men and women to integrate a "community of citizens."⁴⁵ The civic dimension allows us to investigate the different forms of extremism and violence and rebellion, of which "jihadism" is the most obvious example. It also allows us to examine illegal migration, and smuggling....

Here we can also investigate the civic practices of young men and women: Who participates in elections, public life, community activism, and civic life at the local level, i.e. "grassroots citizenship."⁴⁶ We can also look at the behaviors, i.e. civility and incivility, in public spaces, the work place, neighborhoods, and schools.

⁴³ P.Fargues 2005, Women in Arab countries: challenging the patriarchal system? Reproductive Health Matters, Vol. 13, Number 25:161-5 ;

⁴⁴ Mounira Charrad, "Good Practices in Family Policy Making: Family Policy Development, Monitoring and Implementation: Lessons Learnt" UNDESA,2014

⁴⁵ Dominique Schnapper : La Communauté des citoyens. Sur l'idée moderne de nation, Paris, Gallimard, NRF essais, 1994.

⁴⁶ Valérie Sala Pala, "Quand des jeunes d'un quartier populaire interprètent les émeutes urbaines," in Sophie Bérout, Boris Gobbille et ali, Engagements, rebellions et genre dans les quartiers populaires en Europe, 1968-2005, Paris, eds. Des Archives Contemporaines, 2011, pp. 43-61.

Leisure, sport, music

The 100 million young people in the MENA region are a huge opportunity for the region if their needs are taken into consideration. Their movements and protests during the Arab spring highlight the importance of this population. There has been a variety of research conducted to identify obstacles and recommendations of the youth of the region⁴⁷ but, we still don't have details about youth leisure activities. New research could deepen our understanding of the gender disparities and differences.

The CAWTAR's second competition for young researchers "Les adolescentes dans leurs loisirs: pratiques musicales, artistiques et rapport aux medias" reported on the gender gap in sports and free time.⁴⁸ Research confirmed that young men and boys have more free time outside of the home and consequently outside of the control of the family; however, girls and women spent more time at home and thus under family control.⁴⁹

A summary of the findings outlined in this adolescent CAWTAR's report:

- Unequal social involvement in a number of activities in general, and within particular countries, related to computer-use and sports, the latter being virtually reserved for males
- Great disparity in opportunities for practicing hobbies, behavior control, and varieties of interest
- Few institutions, facilities or infrastructure for cultural or social activities; those available to low income families still cost too much
- Gender "preferences" in films or plays (few films that appeal to women); widespread T.V. watching
- Decline in reading among both sexes
- Music ranking highest among youth interests in all countries

SAHWA could address some questions on the change in gender divide for the IT generation in MENA countries: for example if youth are sharing more common games and if they have the same interest?⁵⁰

Is the Arab spring reinforcing these trends? How and what are the new "messages?"⁵¹

⁴⁷ World bank Middle East and North Africa: Youth facts ;2007;WB report on Morocco2012, world bank, Breaking the Barriers to youth inclusion, report on Tunisia 2014; see also Middle East Initiative, MEYL WWW.meyl.org

⁴⁸ CAWTAR: www.genderclearinghouse.org/upload/Assets/.../3CallPaperAdoFr.pdf

⁴⁹ UNICEF report 2011, dir. Rami G. Khouri A generation on the move :insight into the conditions , aspirations and activism of Arab youth ,chap 05 ,young women and girls :the gendered experience of growing up a young Arab women

⁵⁰ Prescott, Julie, gender considerations and influence in the Digital Media and gaming industry, Prescott &Bogg, 2014

⁵¹ Sebastien Boussoles, Jeunesses, portraits et identités d'une generation qui fera l'avenir du monde arabe, Medea 2013; Robert Stebbins work and leisure in the Middle East: the common ground of two separate world, transactions publishers, New Jersey 2012



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